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SIPDIS

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WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XOX
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USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECT COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

11. Iranian Nuclear Race

Key stories in the media:

The Jerusalem Post and other media reported the IDF is gearing up for a crackdown on the Islamic Jihad in the West Bank, wishing to apprehend "all of the terrorists" there. The report adds that Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said Tuesday "Israel was not planning another wide scope military operation like Defensive Shield," adding that he intended to lead a significant diplomatic operation in order to influence the US and Europe to pressure the Palestinian Authority. Israel also suspended VIP entry permits for Palestinian officials and would buffer its forces in border areas near the West Bank, Shalom said. His remarks were made during a meeting with the US ambassador to Israel, Richard Jones. On the same issue, Israel Radio quoted this morning Sheickh Hussan, Hamas's head in the West Bank, currently in an Israeli jail, as saying that all the Palestinian factions are committed to the "tahadiya" and the consensus on that issue must be preserved. He said the reason for the suicide bombings lies with the Israeli occupation. He refused to condemn Monday's suicide bombing in Netanya. Yousef said Hamas leaders are candidates in the Palestinian parliamentary election and Hamas is willing to cooperate with any Palestinian party. However, Hamas has not yet decided whether it will join the Palestinian government.

All media reported on the Counter-Terrorism warning last night advising all Israeli travelers to leave Sinai immediately due to threats that Israelis would be kidnapped there. Earlier in the day, the security cabinet rejected a plan to overhaul security, most significantly by erecting a new and robust security fence along the border with Egypt at a cost of NIS 1.5 billion over three years. Instead, the cabinet approved an allocation of NIS 150 million for the time being.

Maariv bannered on its front page the delay in the completion of the security fence which is barely half finished, though it was to have been completed by the end of 2005. According to the report, only about one-third of it has been constructed. Palestinian terrorists have improved their methods of getting past the fence even in the sectors where it does exist and, as such, the terrorist who carried out the suicide bombing two days ago in Netanya could have entered Israel almost without difficulty. Maariv also found that the Jerusalem sector is still totally unprotected. The fence and the wall have been erected only along 20 kilometers in north Jerusalem, leaving the eastern areas of the city wide open. In addition a huge gap of about 60 kilometers remains in the Gush Etzion area. Deputy Defense Minister Ze'ev Boim placed most of the blame on the office of the state attorney. "A lot of petitions have been submitted to the High Court of Justice," Boim said, "but sometimes the state attorney's office makes difficulties for us even before a petition has been filed with the High Court. The court's deliberations on each section of the fence drag

on for many months, during which the gaps remain open."

The Jerusalem Post carries a report on an interview with Attorney Talia Sasson, author of the state-commissioned report on unauthorized outposts in the West Bank, who says that ever since the report was published last March, "only a handful of remedial steps have been taken." Sasson added that the ministerial committee headed by Justice Minister Tzipi Livni appointed to study Sasson's recommendations on instituting proper governmental procedures for building legally in the territories has disintegrated without coming to any decisions on how to implement the recommendations. Sasson said that though she had called on the government to immediately dismantle all of the unauthorized outposts, so far not a single such outpost has been removed. She added that the army had agreed to implement some of her other recommendations, but had not done so.

Yediot Aharonot and The Jerusalem Post reported that the Israeli public has deemed poverty as the most urgent problem the government needs to tackle, according to the "Alternative Poverty Report" published by the "Latet" ["To Give"] Organization on Tuesday. The second most urgent problem, according to the public, is the level of education, while the security problem came in at only third. Nearly one third of Israelis said they were concerned that they or their family could descend into poverty in the near future, while over one half said that they knew at least one person who had been able to live at a decent level but was now unable to. According to the report, 80 percent of the public thinks that the government doesn't help and only makes matters worse.

The media carry public opinion polls held after the Netanyahu attack. The Haaretz-Dialog survey conducted Monday and Tuesday, shows that if the elections were held today, Kadima under P.M. Sharon would win 39 Knesset seats, 2 seats up from last week's poll, while "leaderless" Likud goes up from nine to 12 seats; and Labor loses four seats, with 26 in the current poll. Other parties seem unaffected. A Maariv poll shows Kadima keeping the 39 seats previous polls had given it, while Labor is seen losing steam here as well. The Maariv report cites associates of Labor Secretary General Peretz saying they are worried by this trend and thus wish to advance the party primaries "to stop party infighting as soon as possible," while Sharon's associates say they are concerned by the quick rise of the new party, as they would rather a slower growth rate.

Israel Radio and The IDF Radio reported this morning that recently appointed Likud Secretary General Tzahi Hanegbi will announce this morning that he is quitting his party and joining Sharon's Kadima Party. At the same time, upon concluding their investigation, the police are recommending that a charge sheet be filed against Hanegbi on suspicions of political misconduct and favoritism.

Yediot Aharonot reports that "Prime Minister Ari'el Sharon has a new and surprising supporter." Speaking yesterday at an international media conference in Dubai, Saudi billionaire prince Walid Bin Talla said that it seems Sharon has changed and toned down his stands, formed a new Israeli party, Peres joined him, and he presents moderate stands. The Saudi prince said, "Sharon should be given a chance to prove his intentions and, if he attains peace, he must be encouraged."

11. Iranian Nuclear Race

Summary

The Jerusalem Post editorialized: "On the one hand, the head of the IAEA cannot say for sure that Iran is developing a bomb, even though Teheran has been claiming its right to do so from the roof tops, and the most of the world is convinced that the mullahs would like to build a bomb as quickly as they can. On the other hand, the IAEA is admitting its own limitations at knowing exactly what Iran is doing at this moment, given that nation's strenuous and proven efforts to fool the international community.. If Iran obtains a bomb, it will be because free nations have not banded together to use their extensive economic, diplomatic, and, if necessary, military assets to protect themselves. Where there is a will, there is a way."

Bloc quotes

"Iran Can Be Stopped"

The Jerusalem Post editorialized: "In London yesterday, International Atomic Energy Agency chief

Mohamed ElBaradei said he found no 'smoking gun' in Iran that would indicate a nuclear weapons program. He also admitted that, for 18 years, Iran had a nuclear program that the IAEA failed to detect. These two statements by ElBaradei express a large part of the predicament facing those who would rely on his international agency to prevent Iran from developing a bomb. On the one hand, the head of the IAEA cannot say for sure that Iran is developing a bomb, even though Teheran has been claiming its right to do so from the rooftops, and most of the world is convinced that the mullahs would like to build a bomb as quickly as they can. On the other hand, the IAEA is admitting its own limitations at knowing exactly what Iran is doing at this moment, given that nation's strenuous and proven efforts to fool the international community.. Our leadership has indeed been outspoken. In addition to the comments by [Chief of Staff] Dan Halutz, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said that 'Israel, and other countries cannot accept a situation where Iran has nuclear arms. The issue is clear to us and we are making all the necessary preparations to handle a situation of this kind.' Indeed, almost everyone - the US, Israel, and Europe - says that an Iranian bomb is unacceptable. This begs the obvious question: What is the international community going to do about it? . this is no time for leaders in any Western capital to throw up their hands and assume that an Iranian bomb is unstoppable. If Iran obtains a bomb, it will be because free nations have not banded together to use their extensive economic, diplomatic, and, if necessary, military assets to protect themselves. Where there is a will, there is a way."

Jones